



**North Carolina Department of Agriculture
& Consumer Services**

**Specialty Crop Block
Grant Program- Farm Bill
Grant Manual**

**Grant Concept Paper Due Date:
Friday, March 25, 2016
5:00 PM**

Steve Troxler - Commissioner

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Additional copies of this publication may be obtained from our website at:
<http://www.ncspecialtycropgrant.org>

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Farm Bill FY 2016 Grant Manual

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I. General Information

A. Selection Process

A two phase selection process will be observed.

Phase I Concept Paper Submitted
 Administrative Review
 Selection Committee Review

Top selections invited to Phase II

Phase II Grant Proposals Submitted (Revised Concept Paper)
 Risk Assessment and Evaluation
 Administrative Review
 Applications sent to USDA for Approval

B. List of Terms and Acronyms

Administrative Costs – All executive, organizational, and clerical costs associated with the general management of an organization and not costs for the direct execution of the grant project.

AMS – Agricultural Marketing Service (a Division of USDA)

Authorized Agent, Authorized Signer – Individual authorized to receive funds on behalf of grantee.

Authorized Signature – Signature of Authorized Signer

Beginning Farmer - An individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.

Collaboration – Any cooperative effort of eligible applicants, universities, or industry trade associations to execute the completion of the proposed grant project.

Concept Paper – A partial application that reflect the intent, method, intended outcome, timeline and budget for the proposed project. Concept papers are intended to aid the selection committee in discussion and selection of projects to fund.

Cover Page – A document noting grantee project title, organization name, requested amount, address and other pertinent information.

DBA – Doing Business As

Socially Disadvantaged Farmer – is a farmer who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A Socially Disadvantaged Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color,

national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

Grant Award Contract – The NCDA&CS's contract with the authorized signer indicating the grantee's intention to complete the proposed tasks and authorizing the NCDA&CS to monitor the progress of the proposed project.

Matching Funds – A cash contribution toward the completion of the project or new, verifiable in-kind expenditures that the applicant or collaborators will incur contingent upon receiving a grant award.

NCDA&CS – The North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services

Project – Activities proposed to be funded by the SCBGP.

Project Profile – The "Project Work Plan" containing the project intent, outcome, timeline and budget.

Responsible Party – The person who is accountable for execution of the grant project.

SCGBP – Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Farm Bill

Specialty Crop – fruits and tree nuts, vegetables, culinary herbs and spices, medicinal plants, as well as nursery, floriculture, and horticulture crops. – See link to expanded list in Section I.H.

State Plan – The document submitted by the NCDA&CS to the USDA, which includes the project profile for all projects recommended for USDA.

USDA – United States Department of Agriculture

C. Mission Statement

The mission of the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is to improve the state of agriculture in North Carolina by providing services to farmers and agribusinesses, and to serve the citizens of North Carolina by providing services and enforcing laws to protect consumers.

D. Background

The Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 authorized the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 and

the Agriculture Act of 2014 (Farm Bill) amended the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004. Under the amended Act, the Secretary of Agriculture is directed to make grants to States to be used by State Departments of Agriculture to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

E. Funding Source and Available Funds

AMS is charged with distributing block grant funds to State Departments of Agriculture, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Successful project application funding is contingent upon the available funding from the USDA, AMS. The USDA is the funding entity and has the final approval for projects submitted to the USDA for the Specialty Crop Block Grant. Although the NCDA&CS and a review panel of industry representatives will make the initial review and award recommendations to the Director, who will approve the state plan for submittal to USDA, the **USDA will make the final decision concerning grant awards**. The NCDA&CS reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the amount requested.

The NCDA&CS will award multiple grants from these funds for the fiscal year 2016 grant cycle. Determination of funding allocations will be competitive with awards made to the top qualifying applicants.

F. Reimbursements and Funding Advances

Each payment is conditioned upon receipt and approval by the Program Coordinator of the Deliverable(s) specified in the Scope of Work and shall be accompanied by reasonable assurance (documentation, receipts, invoices, etc.) that the goods and services for which payment is requested were actually received and performed. The NCDA&CS, NC-SCBGP has the right to disallow costs determined inappropriate or unreasonable.

G. Eligible Applicants

State and/or local governmental units, academia [Universities and Colleges], and non-profit organizations, including producer associations, community-based organizations and other specialty crop stakeholders are eligible to apply. Multi-state projects will be considered by the NC-SCBGP.

NC-SCBGP grant funds will be awarded for projects of up to two (2) years duration. More than one project application packet per applicant may be submitted. If submitting multiple project application packets, please prioritize your submissions by indicating the priority order at the top, right hand corner of the "Application Cover Page".

H. Funding Priorities

Applicants are to develop projects that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Major areas of Focus - Not limited to these issues affecting the specialty crop industry.

- Increasing Specialty Crop nutrition education and consumption
- Improving efficiency and reducing costs of production and distribution systems
- Good Agricultural Practices
- Good Handling Practices
- Good Manufacturing Practices
- Specialty Crop research, pest and disease control
- Organic and Sustainability Production Practices
- Enhancing food safety
- Developing new and improved seed varieties

Eligible applicants may wish to consider submitting grants that increase the competitiveness of specialty crop farmers, including Native American and disadvantaged farmers. Increasing competitiveness may include developing local and regional food systems, and improving food access in underserved communities.

I. Eligible and Ineligible Specialty Crops

Commonly recognized specialty crops are fruits and tree nuts, vegetables, culinary herbs and spices, medicinal plants, as well as nursery, floriculture, and horticulture crops. Please see <http://www.ams.usda.gov/scbqp> for a comprehensive listing.

J. General Compliance

All awarded grant projects must comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations and the terms of the grant award. The Grantee shall comply, as applicable, with the Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act of 2004 of Public Law 108-465 (7 U.S.C. § 1621 note); specialty crop block grant program regulations at 7 C.F.R. Parts 1290 and 1291; and uniform federal grant regulations at 7 C.F.R. Parts 3015, 3016, 48 C.F.R. Subpart 31.2 and 2 C.F.R. Part 200.

K. Permitting Requirements

NC-SCBGP funded projects may involve conducting work that requires permits and clearances from various agencies. The NCDA&CS and NC-SCBGP does not determine which, if any, permits are required for specific projects nor does it review permits for accuracy or appropriateness.

Applicants are responsible for determining that all necessary permits that apply to their project are identified and obtained.

L. Arbitration

To the extent required pursuant to North Carolina General Statute and any successor statute, the parties agree to use arbitration, after exhausting all applicable administrative remedies, to resolve disputes arising out of the Grant Award Contract.

M. Disagreement Process

The NC-SCBGP reserves the right to reject any application packet due to ineligibility or requirements not met as stated in this grant manual. Disagreements will be addressed pursuant to North Carolina General Statutes.

N. Indemnification

The parties involved with a fully executed contract awarding funds to carry out a NC-SCBGP project agree that the State of North Carolina, its departments, agencies, boards and commissions shall be indemnified and held harmless by the contractor for the vicarious liability of the State as a result of entering into this contract. However, the parties further agree that the State of North Carolina, its departments, agencies, boards and commissions shall be responsible for its own negligence. Each party to a contract is responsible for its own negligence.

O. Non-Discrimination

The Grantee agrees to comply with Federal and North Carolina General Statutes prohibiting discrimination in employment.

P. Conflict of Interest

The Grant Award Contract will be subject to termination. Successful applicants must provide a copy of their currently, approved current conflict of interest policies pursuant to North Carolina General Statute.

Q. Non-Availability of Funds

Every payment obligation of the State under a Grant Award Contract will be conditioned upon the availability of funds appropriated or allocated for the payment of such obligation. If funds are not allocated and available for the continuance of the Contract, it may be terminated by the State at the end of the period for which funds are available. No liability shall accrue to the State in the event this provision is exercised, and the State shall not be obligated or liable for any future payments or for any damages as a result of termination under this paragraph.

R. Records Requirements

Pursuant to North Carolina General Statute and 7 C.F.R. §§ 3015.21 & 3016.42, the Grantee shall retain and shall contractually require each subcontractor to retain all Records for a period of five years after completion date indicated in the Contract and until any litigation, claim, negotiation, audit, cost recovery, or action involving the Records has been completed. All Records shall be subject to inspection and audit by the State and/or USDA at normal business hours. Upon request, the Grantee shall produce the original of any or all Records.

S. Monitoring

The NCDA&CS and NC-SCBGP reserves the ability to perform site monitoring visits to any and all grantees to ensure that work is progressing within the required time frame and that fiscal procedures are followed accurately and appropriately. Monitoring includes both financial and program information as well as site visits.

T. Multi-State Projects

Multi-state projects will be given consideration. Contact the NCDA&CS SCBGP Administrator to discuss if this is of particular interest. Each State's project applicant participating in the multi-state project should submit the project to their State's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and indicate which State is taking the coordinating role and the percent of the budget covered by each State.

II. Concept Paper Ground Rules, Tips, and Helpful Advice

Questions will be answered on a conference call February 22, at 10:00 A.M. Phone number to be available on our website when available. www.ncspecialtycropgrant.org.

A. Concept Paper Requirements

All organizations **must** adhere to the following instructions, in addition to other requirements as stated in this grant manual, to be considered eligible for grants.

- Concept Papers missing any of the subsequent information may be deemed ineligible.
- Complete the four (4) required forms and templates that make up the Concept Paper Packet. The Concept Paper Cover, Project Profile, Biographical Sketches, Concept Paper Signature Page and Letters of Support (optional). Current forms available on the NC-SCBGP web page www.ncspecialtycropgrant.org.
- Use the North Carolina Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Project Profile Template as your guide. You should fill out the information for each question then delete the instructions in each section keeping all formatting consistent.
- Concept Papers are to be a maximum of **12 pages** in length. This does NOT include the Concept Paper Cover Sheet, or **other allowable** attachments such as Researcher's Vitae and Letters of Support.
- Submit **one (1)** printed complete original Concept Paper packet signed in **BLUE INK**, and **five (5)** complete copies of the Concept Paper packet.

Concept Papers should contain the following:

1. Concept Paper Cover

2. Project Profile

See the Instructions for Completing Concept Paper and examples below for information.

3. Biographical Sketches

Provide a resume or biographical sketch of each person who has primary responsibility for developing and implementing the proposal. Information should clarify each person's project responsibilities and highlight their qualifications.

4. Concept Paper Signature Page

By signing the signature page, the Authorizing Agent is guaranteeing that the information contained in the Concept Paper is correct and verifiable.

5. Letters of Support (Optional)

Attach any letters providing evidence of support for the project.

Please use the Project Profile Templet form available on the web Page.

www.ncspecialtycropgrant.org.

Instructions and example of Project Profile:

The Program Project Profile should include the project details and necessary information to fulfill the goals and objectives of the project. The acceptable font size for the narrative is 11 or 12 pitch with all margins at 1 inch. The following information must be included in the project profile. Please delete questions and guidance items from the Finished Project profile (including this paragraph). **Submit only your information and answers to these questions under each heading.**

PROJECT TITLE

Provide a descriptive project title in 6 words or less in the space below.

DURATION OF PROJECT

Start Date: Start Date

End Date: End Date

PROJECT PARTNER AND SUMMARY

Include a project summary of 250 words or less suitable for dissemination to the public. A Project Summary provides a very brief (one sentence, if possible) description of your project. A Project Summary includes:

- 1. The name of the applicant organization that if awarded a grant will establish an agreement or contractual relationship with the State department of agriculture to lead and execute the project,*
- 2. A concise outline the project's outcome(s), and*
- 3. A description of the general tasks to be completed during the project period to fulfill this goal.*

FOR EXAMPLE:

The ABC University will mitigate the spread of citrus greening (Huanglongbing) by developing scientifically-based practical measures to implement in a quarantine area and disseminating results to stakeholders through grower meetings and field days.

PROJECT PURPOSE

PROVIDE THE SPECIFIC ISSUE, PROBLEM OR NEED THAT THE PROJECT WILL ADDRESS

PROVIDE A LISTING OF THE OBJECTIVES THAT THIS PROJECT HOPES TO ACHIEVE

Add more objectives by copying and pasting the existing listing or delete objectives that aren't necessary.

Objective 1

Objective 2

Objective 3

Objective 4

Add other objectives as necessary

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

Estimate the number of project beneficiaries: **Enter the Number of Beneficiaries**

Does this project directly benefit socially disadvantaged farmers as defined in the RFA or the 2016 NC-SCBGP Grant Manual?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Does this project directly benefit beginning farmers as defined in the RFA or the 2016 NC-SCBGP Grant Manual?

Yes ☐

No ☐

STATEMENT OF SOLELY ENHANCING SPECIALTY CROPS

By checking the box to the right, I confirm that this project **solely** enhances the competitiveness of specialty crops in accordance with and defined by [7 U.S.C. 1621](#).

Further information regarding the definition of a specialty crop can be found at www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp.

☐

CONTINUATION PROJECT INFORMATION

If your project is continuing the efforts of a previously funded SCBGP project, address the following:

DESCRIBE HOW THIS PROJECT WILL DIFFER FROM AND BUILD ON THE PREVIOUS EFFORTS

PROVIDE A SUMMARY (3 TO 5 SENTENCES) OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE PREVIOUS EFFORTS

PROVIDE LESSONS LEARNED ON POTENTIAL PROJECT IMPROVEMENTS

What was previously learned from implementing this project, including potential improvements?

How are the lessons learned and improvements being incorporated into the project to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting goals and outcomes?

DESCRIBE THE LIKELIHOOD OF THE PROJECT BECOMING SELF-SUSTAINING AND NOT INDEFINITELY DEPENDENT ON GRANT FUNDS

OTHER SUPPORT FROM FEDERAL OR STATE GRANT PROGRAMS

The SCBGP will not fund duplicative projects. Did you submit this project to a Federal or State grant program other than the SCBGP for funding and/or is a Federal or State grant program other than the SCBGP funding the project currently?

Yes

☐

No

☐

IF YOUR PROJECT IS RECEIVING OR WILL POTENTIALLY RECEIVE FUNDS FROM ANOTHER FEDERAL OR STATE GRANT PROGRAM

Identify the Federal or State grant program(s).

Describe how the SCBGP project differs from or supplements the other grant program(s) efforts.

EXTERNAL PROJECT SUPPORT

Describe the specialty crop stakeholders who support this project and why (other than the applicant and organizations involved in the project).

EXPECTED MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

SELECT THE APPROPRIATE OUTCOME(S) AND INDICATOR(S)/SUB-INDICATOR(S)

You must choose at least one of the eight outcomes listed in the [SCBGP Performance Measures](#), which were approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to evaluate the performance of the SCBGP on a national level.

OUTCOME MEASURE(S)

Select the outcome measure(s) that are applicable for this project from the listing below.

☐

Outcome 1: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales (required for marketing projects)

THIS IS MANDATORY FOR ALL MARKETING AND PROMOTION PROJECTS.

1. Uses of social media to market and promote;
2. Specialty crop local, regional and national campaigns;
3. Specialty crop only tradeshow;
4. Website promotion and development;
5. Use/development of billboards, radio, television, magazine and email ads, marketing materials such as direct mail, brochures;
6. Agritourism;
7. Export market development;
8. Retail promotions including point-of-purchase items, labels, packaging etc.;
9. Farmers market promotions; and
10. Marketing and promotion campaigns with an education component directed to consumers.

Indicator:

- ☐ Sales increased from \$_____ to \$_____ and by _____ percent, as result of marketing and/or promotion activities
- ☐ **Outcome 2:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased consumption

Indicators:

- ☐ 1. Of the _____total number of children and youth reached,
- a. The number that gained knowledge about eating more specialty crops
 - b. The number that reported an intention to eat more specialty crops
 - c. The number that reported eating more specialty crops
- ☐ 2. Of the _____total number of adults reached,
- a. The number that gained knowledge about eating more specialty crops
 - b. The number that reported an intention to eat more specialty crops
 - c. The number that reported eating more specialty crops
- ☐ 3. Number of new and improved technologies and processes to enhance the nutritional value and consumer acceptance of specialty crops (excluding patents) _____
- ☐ 4. Number of new specialty crops and/or specialty crop products introduced to consumers_____
- ☐ **Outcome 3:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased access

Indicators:

- ☐ 1. Of the _____total number of consumers or wholesale buyers reached,
- a. The number that gained knowledge on how to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops
 - b. The number that reported an intention to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops
 - c. The number that reported supplementing their diets with specialty crops that they produced/preserved/obtained/prepared

- ☐ 2. Of the ____ total number of individuals (culinary professionals, institutional kitchens, specialty crop entrepreneurs such as kitchen incubators/shared-use kitchens, etc.) reached,
 - a. The number that gained knowledge on how to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops
 - b. The number that reported an intention to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops
 - c. The number that reported supplementing their diets with specialty crops that they produced/prepared/preserved/obtained

- ☐ 3. Number of existing delivery systems/access points of those reached that expanded and/or improved offerings of specialty crops
 - a. ____ farmers markets
 - b. ____ produce at corner stores
 - c. ____ school food programs and other food options (vending machines, school events, etc.)
 - d. ____ grocery stores
 - e. ____ wholesale markets
 - f. ____ food hubs that process, aggregate, distribute, or store specialty crops
 - g. ____ home improvement centers with lawn and garden centers
 - h. ____ lawn and garden centers
 - i. ____ other systems/access points, not noted
 - j. ____ total (if not reported above)

- ☐ 4. Number of new delivery systems/access points offering specialty crops
 - a. ____ farmers markets
 - b. ____ produce at corner stores
 - c. ____ school food programs and other food options (vending machines, school events, etc.)
 - d. ____ grocery stores
 - e. ____ wholesale markets
 - f. ____ food hubs that process, aggregate, distribute, or store specialty crops
 - g. ____ home improvement centers with lawn and garden centers
 - h. ____ lawn and garden centers
 - i. ____ other systems/access points, not noted
 - j. ____ total (if not reported above)

- ☐ **Outcome 4:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through greater capacity of sustainable practices of specialty crop production resulting in increased yield, reduced inputs, increased efficiency, increased economic return, and/or conservation of resources

Indicators:

- ☐ 1. Numbers of plant/seed releases (i.e., cultivars, drought-tolerant plants, organic, enhanced nutritional composition, etc.) ____

- ☐ 2. Adoption of best practices and technologies resulting in increased yields, reduced inputs, increased efficiency, increased economic return, and conservation of resources (select at least one below).
 - a. Number of growers/producers indicating adoption of recommended practices

- b. Number of growers/producers reporting reduction in pesticides, fertilizer, water used/acre _____
 - c. Number of producers reporting increased dollar returns per acre or reduced costs per acre _____
 - d. Number of acres in conservation tillage or acres in other best management practices _____
- ☐ 3. Number of habitat acres established and maintained for the mutual benefit of pollinators and specialty crops _____
- ☐ **Outcome 5:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through more sustainable, diverse, and resilient specialty crop systems

Indicators:

- ☐ 1. Number of new or improved innovation models (biological, economic, business, management, etc.), technologies, networks, products, processes, etc. developed for specialty crop entities including producers, processors, distributors, etc. _____
- ☐ 2. Number of innovations adopted _____
- ☐ 3. Number of specialty crop growers/producers (and other members of the specialty crop supply chain) that have increased revenue expressed in dollars _____
- ☐ 4. Number of new diagnostic systems analyzing specialty crop pests and diseases. _____ [Diagnostic systems refer to, among other things: labs, networks, procedures, access points.]
- ☐ 5. Number of new diagnostic technologies available for detecting plant pests and diseases. _____ [The intent here is not to count individual pieces of equipment or devices, but to enumerate technologies that add to the diagnostic capacity.]
- ☐ 6. Number of first responders trained in early detection and rapid response to combat plant pests and diseases _____
- ☐ 7. Number of viable technologies/processes developed or modified that will increase specialty crop distribution and/or production _____
- ☐ 8. Number of growers/producers that gained knowledge about science-based tools through outreach and education programs _____
- ☐ **Outcome 6:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increasing the number of viable technologies to improve food safety

Indicators:

- ☐ 1. Number of viable technologies developed or modified for the detection and characterization of specialty crop supply contamination from foodborne threats _____
- ☐ 2. Number of viable prevention, control and intervention strategies for all specialty crop production scales for foodborne threats along the production continuum _____
- ☐ 3. Number of individuals who learn about prevention, detection, control, and intervention food safety practices and number of those individuals who increase their food safety skills and knowledge _____
- ☐ 4. Number of improved prevention, detection, control, and intervention technologies _____
- ☐ 5. Number of reported changes in prevention, detection, control, and intervention strategies _____

- ☐ **Outcome 7:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased understanding of the ecology of threats to food safety from microbial and chemical sources

Indicators:

Number of projects focused on:

- ☐ 1. Increased understanding of fecal indicators and pathogens ____
- ☐ 2. Increased safety of all inputs into the specialty crop chain ____
- ☐ 3. Increased understanding of the roles of humans, plants and animals as vectors ____
- ☐ 4. Increased understanding of preharvest and postharvest process impacts on microbial and chemical threats ____
- ☐ 5. Number of growers or producers obtaining on-farm food safety certifications (such as Good Agricultural Practices or Good Handling Practices) ____

- ☐ **Outcome 8:** Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through enhancing or improving the economy as a result of specialty crop development

Indicators:

- ☐ 1. Number of new rural careers created ____
- ☐ 2. Number of new urban careers created ____
- ☐ 3. Number of jobs maintained/created ____
- ☐ 4. Number of small businesses maintained/created ____
- ☐ 5. Increased revenue/increased savings/one-time capital purchases (in dollars) ____
- ☐ 6. Number of new beginning farmers who went into specialty crop production ____
- ☐ 7. Number of socially disadvantaged famers who went into specialty crop production ____

OUTCOME INDICATOR(S)

Provide at least one indicator listed above and the related quantifiable result. If you have multiple outcomes and/or indicators, repeat this for each outcome/indicator. More details and instructions are in the 2016 NC-SCBGP Grant Manual.

For example:

Outcome 2, Indicator 1.a.

Of the 150 total number of children and youth reached, 132 will gain knowledge about eating more specialty

MISCELLANEOUS OUTCOME MEASURE

In the unlikely event that the outcomes and indicators above the selected outcomes are not relevant to your project, you must develop a project-specific outcome(s) and indicator(s) which will be subject to approval by AMS.

DATA COLLECTION TO REPORT ON OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS

Explain how you will collect the required data to report on the outcome and indicator in the space below.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

All expenses described in this Budget Narrative must be associated with expenses that will be covered by the SCBGP. If any matching funds will be used and a description of their use is required by the State department of agriculture, the expenses to be covered with matching funds must be described separately. Applicants should review the Request for Applications section 4.6 Funding Restrictions prior to developing their budget narrative.

Budget Summary	
Expense Category	Funds Requested
Personnel	
Fringe Benefits	
Travel	
Equipment (NC-SCBGP does not allow these purchases)	\$0.00
Supplies	
Contractual	
Other	
Direct Costs Subtotal	

Total Budget	
--------------	--

PERSONNEL

List the organization's employees whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. See the Request for Applications section 4.6.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities, Salaries and Wages, and Presenting Direct and Indirect Costs Consistently under section 4.6.1 for further guidance.

#	Name/Title	Level of Effort (# of hours OR % FTE)	Funds Requested
1			
2			

3			
4	Add other Personnel as necessary		

Personnel Subtotal

PERSONNEL JUSTIFICATION

For each individual listed in the above table, describe the activities to be completed by name/title including approximately when activities will occur. Add more personnel by copying and pasting the existing listing or deleting personnel that aren't necessary.

#	Name/Title: Who will do the work? Indicate the project participants who will do the work of each activity, including subrecipients, and/or contractors. If you request grant funds for personnel and contractors, you must include them in the work plan to demonstrate the requested funding is warranted. If you request funds for travel, these activities must also be included.	Project Activities - Describe the project activities that are necessary to accomplish the objectives. Make sure you include your performance monitoring/data collection activities. Please list all activities and target dates under each person name.	When will the activity be accomplished? Include a timeline that indicates when each activity will occur (at least month and year) and beginning and end dates for the project. Make sure the work plan timeline shows that the project will be completed within the allowable grant period.
1			
2			
3			
4			

FRINGE BENEFITS

Provide the fringe benefit rates for each of the project's salaried employees described in the Personnel section that will be paid with SCBGP funds.

#	Name/Title	Fringe Benefit Rate	Funds Requested
1			
2			
3			

4			
---	--	--	--

Fringe Subtotal	
-----------------	--

TRAVEL

Explain the purpose for each Trip Request. Please note that travel costs are limited to those allowed by formal organizational policy; in the case of air travel, project participants must use the lowest reasonable commercial airfares. Travel expenses associated with the project shall follow the North Carolina State Travel Policy. The approved travel rate sheet has a link on the [NC-SCBGP web page](#). See the [Request for Applications](#) section 4.6.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities, Travel, and Foreign Travel for further guidance.

#	Trip Destination	Type of Expense (airfare, car rental, hotel, meals, mileage, etc.)	Unit of Measure (days, nights, miles)	# of Units	Cost per Unit	# of Travelers Claiming the Expense	Funds Requested
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							

Travel Subtotal	
-----------------	--

TRAVEL JUSTIFICATION

For each trip listed in the above table describe the purpose of this trip and how it will achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. Be sure to include approximately when the trip will occur. Add more trips by copying and pasting the existing listing or delete trips that aren't necessary.

Trip 1 (Approximate Date of Travel MM/YYYY):

Trip 2(Approximate Date of Travel MM/YYYY):

Trip 3(Approximate Date of Travel MM/YYYY):

Add other Trips as necessary

CONFORMING WITH YOUR TRAVEL POLICY

By checking the box to the right, I confirm that my organization's established travel policies will be adhered to when completing the above-mentioned trips in accordance with [2 CFR 200.474](#) or [48 CFR subpart 31.2](#) as applicable.

☐

EQUIPMENT

*Capital expenditures for equipment, buildings, and land are unallowable as direct or indirect charges. **Items purchased with a value greater than \$5,000.00 are considered equipment and are unallowable.***

Equipment Subtotal	\$0.00
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SUPPLIES

List the materials, supplies, and fabricated parts costing less than \$5,000 per unit and describe how they will support the purpose and goal of the proposal and solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. See Request for Applications section 4.6.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities, Supplies and Materials, Including Costs of Computing Devices for further information.

Item Description	Per-Unit Cost	# of Units/Pieces Purchased	Acquire When?	Funds Requested

Supplies Subtotal	
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SUPPLIES JUSTIFICATION

Describe the purpose of each supply listed in the table above purchased and how it is necessary for the completion of the project's objective(s) and outcome(s).

CONTRACTUAL/CONSULTANT

Contractual/consultant costs are the expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship. If there is more than one contractor or consultant, each must be described separately. (Repeat this section for each contract/consultant.)

ITEMIZED CONTRACTOR(S)/CONSULTANT(S)

Provide an itemized budget (personnel, fringe, travel, equipment, supplies, other, etc.) with appropriate justification. No indirect costs are to be included in the contract.

#	Name/Organization	Hourly Rate/Flat Rate	Funds Requested
1			
2			
3			
4			

Contractual/Consultant Subtotal	
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CONTRACTUAL JUSTIFICATION

Describe the project activities each contractor or consultant will accomplish to meet the objectives and outcomes of the project. Include timelines for each activity. If contractor employee and consultant hourly rates of pay exceed the salary of a GS-15 step 10 Federal employee in your area (for more information please go to <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/2016/general-schedule/>), provide a justification for the expenses. This limit does not include fringe benefits, travel, indirect costs, or other expenses. See Request for Applications section 4.6.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities, Contractual and Consultant Costs for acceptable justifications.

Contractor/Consultant 1:

Contractor/Consultant 2:

Contractor/Consultant 3:

Add other Contractors/Consultants as necessary

CONFORMING WITH YOUR PROCUREMENT STANDARDS

By checking the box to the right, I confirm that my organization followed the same policies and procedures used for procurements from non-federal sources, which reflect applicable State and local laws and regulations and conform to the Federal laws and standards identified in [2 CFR Part 200.317 through 326](#), as applicable. If the contractor(s)/consultant(s) are not already selected, my organization will follow the same requirements.

☐

48 CFR 2.101 and 48 CFR 13.106-1 requires documentation of three (3) written, quotes for personal service contracts over \$2,500.00.

OTHER

Include any expenses not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Be sure to break down costs into cost/unit. Expenses in this section include, but are not limited to, meetings and conferences, communications, rental expenses, advertisements, publication costs, and data collection.

If you budget meal costs for reasons other than meals associated with travel per diem, provide an adequate justification to support that these costs are not entertainment costs. See Request for Applications section 4.6.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities, Meals for further guidance.

Item Description	Per-Unit Cost	Number of Units	Acquire When?	Funds Requested

Other Subtotal

OTHER JUSTIFICATION

Describe the purpose of each item listed in the table above purchased and how it is necessary for the completion of the project's objective(s) and outcome(s).

Indirect Subtotal

PROGRAM INCOME

Program income is gross income—earned by a recipient or subrecipient under a grant—directly generated by the grant-supported activity, or earned only because of the grant agreement during the grant period of performance. Program income includes, but is not limited to, income from fees for services performed; the sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award (this includes items sold at cost if the cost of producing the item was funded in whole or partially with grant funds); registration fees for conferences, etc.

Source/Nature of Program Income	Description of how you will reinvest the program income into the project to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops	Estimated Income

Program Income Total	
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Common Budget Exclusions

- Entertainment expenses are not allowable.
- No administration costs may be allotted to the budgeted projects.
- Funding **cannot** be utilized for meals, with the exception of per diem meals consumed during periods of official travel without prior approval.
- Grant funds may not be used to fund political activities in accordance with provisions of the Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. 1501-1508 and 7324-7326).
- Please refer to the SCBGP website for the list of selected items of cost.
www.ncspecialtycropgrant.org

B. Concept Paper Packet Evaluation and Selection Process

All Concept Papers arriving prior to the deadline will be reviewed for completeness by NC-SCBGP staff. Concept Papers which are not complete may not be further considered.

All qualifying Concept Paper packets will be evaluated by the NC-SCBGP Evaluation Committee. The Evaluation Committee will be made up of at least three individuals with the appropriate background and expertise necessary to evaluate project proposals.

The Evaluation Committee will review each SCBGP Concept Paper Packet using standard and consistent review criteria. After the Concept Paper packets have been evaluated and rated, contract offer recommendations will be made to the NC-SCBGP Staff. The SCBGP Evaluation Committee may recommend adjustments to the project proposal, scope of work and/or project budget.

Concept Paper Packet review criteria and score values

To be considered for review the project must:

- Complete Concept packet submitted by deadline
- Submitted by an eligible project partner
- Be an eligible project
- Be a new project partner or a compliant current/past SCBGP recipient

Applicants must complete each section in the Project Profile by answering the questions and providing the requested information.

Concept Cover (10 points)

Project Profile:

- Project Title (not a scored)
- Duration of project (not a scored)
- Project Partner and Summary (15 Points)
- Project Purpose (20 points)
- External project Support (5 points)
- Expected Measurable Outcomes (10 Points)
- Budget (40 Points)

Letters of Support (not scored)

Concept Paper Signature Page (not scored)

Total number of points in concept proposal: 100 Points

Organizations submitting successful Concept Paper packets will be invited to submit a full application for funding. The NC-SCBGP reserves the right to fund the project in part, add and delete tasks, and ask for clarification. No contract will be entered into until the NCDA&CS and NC-SCBGP are satisfied with all the specifications of the project.

The Program Staff will then make funding recommendations to the Director of Marketing based on the rating and the strength of the project proposal as determined by the Evaluation Team. Upon approval all projects will be forwarded in a State Plan for final approval from the USDA.

C. Concept Paper Packet Due Date

The NCDA&CS Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Administrator must receive completed Concept Paper packets no later than **5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 25, 2016.** *This is not a postmark deadline; application packets must be received by the grant deadline date and time.* Grant application packets will be opened and dated when received. **Late application packets will not be accepted and will be returned unopened.** Application packets must be mailed or delivered.

If mailed through USPS, send to:

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
Attn: Jeff Camden
NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
Marketing Division
P.O Box 27647, Raleigh,
North Carolina 27611

If delivered in person or UPS/FEDEX:

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
Attn: Jeff Camden
NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
Marketing Division
2 West Edenton Street
Raleigh, NC 27601

D. Contact Information

Jeff Camden
North Carolina Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Administrator.
Email Address: specialtycropgrant@ncagr.gov
Phone Number: 919-707-3111

III. Details on Grant Awards and Reporting

A. Application Packet Requirements

All applicants **must** adhere to the following instructions, in addition to other requirements as stated in this grant manual, including all appendices, to be considered eligible for grants.

- **Only Requested Revised Concept Paper packet will be reviewed in Phase 2** - Current forms available on the SCBGP webpage: www.ncspecialtycropgrant.org.
- **Application Packets missing any of the subsequent information may be deemed ineligible.**
- Proposal(s) must be typed, single spaced, in 12 pt. font.
- Illegible application packets may be determined to be ineligible.
- Proposal(s) must be submitted on 8.5 x 11 white paper.
- Each page must be numbered.
- **Complete application packets are not to exceed twelve (12) pages in length.** *This does NOT include the Grant Application Cover, or other allowable attachments such as researcher vitae's and letters of support.*
- Submit **one (1) printed** complete original application packet, all signatures must be signed, in **BLUE INK**, and **one (1) electronic copy** of the application packet [email, CD, memory stick] (**do not send in an Adobe file, Only Microsoft Word 2003 or newer file**) of the application packet. Signature may be omitted on the submitted electronic signature page.
- **The person authorized to receive funds must sign the application packet and all subsequent documents in the grant process in [BLUE INK](#).**

Applications should be organized and follow the sequence presented in this section.

1. Application Cover Sheet - The signer must be authorized to enter into a Grant Award Contract with the NCDA&CS.

2. Scope of Work - Should be submitted in the same format as the Project Profile in the Concept Paper updated with any requested revisions.

3. Application Authorization Signature Page

By signing the Application Signature Page, the Authorizing Agent is guaranteeing that the information contained in this Application is correct and verifiable. The Authorizing Agent is also affirming that the funds requested herein will be used for the specific purpose outlined in this Application and for no other purpose. (Attach a resolution of the governing

body of the applicant organization, authorizing this person to submit the application in the name of the organization.)

4. Biographical Sketches

Provide a resume or biographical sketch of each person who has primary responsibility for developing and implementing the proposal. Information should clarify each person's project responsibilities and highlight their qualifications.

5. Risk Assessment Information

6. IRS Tax Exempt Status letter

7. Letters of Support (Optional)

Attach any letters providing evidence of support for the project.

B. Application Packet Due Date

The NCDA&CS Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Administrator must receive completed application packets no later than the date agreed upon when invited to submit application packet. Late application packets will not be accepted.

C. Contact Information

If mailed through USPS, send to:

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
Attn: Jeff Camden
NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
Marketing Division
P.O Box 27647,
Raleigh, North Carolina 27611

If delivered in person or UPS/FEDEX:

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
Attn: Jeff Camden
NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
Marketing Division
2 West Edenton Street
Raleigh, NC 27601

Email Address: specialtycropgrant@ncagr.gov
Phone Number: 919-707-3111

D. Notification of Award

All eligible applications will be reviewed. Successful applications will be chosen on the merits of the project as determined by the SCBGP Evaluation Team and will be included in the North Carolina State Plan. This will be submitted to USDA no later than the final deadline which they set for the receiving of applications for approval. Applicants will be notified in writing whether or not their project is selected for inclusion in the North Carolina State Plan. Funding is not guaranteed if the project is included in the State Plan.

Following approval of the North Carolina State Plan by USDA, applicants will be notified and applicants will then be required to supply several supplemental forms [i.e. NC Grants Supplemental form, Conflict of Interest Policy, Sworn Statements of no overdue taxes, etc.] prior to being sent a contract Award Agreement to sign. The Contract Award Agreement will require grantees to agree to the clauses of the Contract and Special Provisions. The NC-SCBGP anticipates that contract awards and notifications will be made in late 2016.

After contract awards have been made, all application packets may be made available to the public. The NC-SCBGP may determine that trade secrets or proprietary information may continue to be held confidential. If you believe that any of the information contained in your application packet should be held confidential you must designate that information as “confidential” in your application packet and provide an explanation as to why it should be held confidential.

E. Grant Award Contract and Payment

Successful applicants shall have a fully executed contract (award) on file, with the NC-SCBGP, prior to receiving any payments. Payments will not be made for expenditures prior to the final execution of the contract. Expenditures incurred prior to the project start date are at the applicant’s own expense.

Failure to submit an executed copy of the Grant Award Contract, and required supplemental information within 30 days of receipt may result in the loss of awarded grant funds, unless the delay was caused by circumstances outside the control of the grantee.

F. Reporting Requirements

Performance and Financial Reports

Final Grant Award Contract will give due dates.

- a) **Bi-annual Reports:** Grantees shall submit a SCBGP Interim Report bi-annually.

Information to be included in the bi-annual reports includes:

1. Financial Report
2. Programmatic Questionnaire

Forms are available on the NC SCBGP website:

www.ncspecialtycropgrant.org

- b) **Final Report:** Due within 60 days following the completion of the project or expiration of the Grant Award Contract. 20% of the Grant Total will be withheld until both the Final Financial Report and Final Programmatic Questionnaire are approved by the NCDA&CS.

Information to be included in the Final reports includes:

1. Financial Report
2. Final Programmatic Questionnaire

Forms are available on the NC-SCBGP website:

www.ncspecialtycropgrant.org

Failure to submit timely reports may result in the forfeiture of advances and reimbursements.

Reimbursement requests may be submitted monthly or when expenses have been incurred. The Grantee must obtain Program Coordinator pre-approval before any funds are reallocated within the original/approved budget in the Grant Application.

The Grantee is responsible for responding to any inquiries from the NC-SCBGP.

G. Federal Accountability and Registration

Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA):

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) requires that all entities receiving federal funds register in the Federal System for Award Management (SAM) database and submit required information as determined in the FFATA regulation. SAM is a Federal Government owned and operated free website that consolidates the capabilities in CCR/FedReg, ORCA, and EPLS. As such, all selected applicants shall register in the SAM database, <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>, and submit any additional forms and/or documentation requested to fulfill the FFATA reporting requirements as outlined by the NCDA&CS. SAM registration must be

maintained and the SAM account must remain active during the entire life of the Grant Award Contract.

H. Amendments

Grantees are highly encouraged to include ample time for project completion. There is no penalty for completing all tasks in the “Work Plan” early. Contract extensions are not encouraged and will only be granted in extreme circumstances.

Contract Award shall be modified by mutual written consent only through a Contract Award Amendment executed by the NCDA&CS and the Grantee. Unauthorized changes to Contract Award shall be void and without effect, and the Grantee shall not be entitled to any claim under a Contract based on those changes. Contract Award are intended to incorporate all provisions required by federal and state law. If the Department learns that a provision required by federal or state law has not been incorporated in the Contract, the parties agree to promptly amend the Contract to include the provision.

Prior to initiating any paperwork, the Program Administrator should be contacted. The Administrator will provide the information needed to begin the initial steps and forms needed to request a Contract Award Amendment.

I. Budget Adjustments

If a project budget adjustment is needed during the project period, a written request may be made to the Program to reallocate budget funds between budget categories. However, the total budget amount, as dictated by the approved grant award, cannot be adjusted. Grantees may not spend funds from line items not approved in the Contract Award. **No deviation from the approved budget will be allowed without prior written approval by the NCDA&CS.**

Unexpended Funds – Grantees shall inform the NC-SBGP of the potential for unexpended awarded grant funds prior to the end of the grant period.

IV. The Grant Application and Supporting Materials

DEADLINE:
COMPLETED CONCEPT PAPER DUE at the NC
Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
by
5 PM on Friday, March 25, 2016.
(This is not a postmark deadline)

A. NC-SCBGP Concept Paper Format and Copy Requirements

Complete all required Forms and Templates and **send one (1) original** plus **five (5) copies** to:
Specialty Crop Grant, NC Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services,
P.O Box 27647, Raleigh, North Carolina 27611

or **deliver** to: **Specialty Crop Block Grant, NC Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services, 2 West Edenton St., Raleigh, NC 27601**

The application must be typed or produced by word processor 12 pt. font, on eight-and-half inch by eleven-inch white paper. Additional materials that will assist the NC-SCBGP in its evaluation of this project may be attached. All Concept Papers, attachments and written materials received by the NC-SBGP are public records. In developing your application, refer to the 2016 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Manual. All required documents and additional information is available on the web at:
<http://www.ncspecialtycropgrant.org>.

The maximum grant amount for 2016 will be no more than \$200,000.

Completed applications must be received or hand-delivered by 5:00 PM on Friday, March 25, 2016 to be considered during this granting cycle.

Inquiries regarding the application process should be addressed to:
Specialty Crop Block Grant Project Administrator – Jeff Camden
1020 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1020
Email: specialtycropgrant@ncagr.gov
Phone: 919-707-3111

B. NC-SCBGP Frequently Asked Questions

1. Are there a maximum number of pages allowed?

*The Project Concept Paper is limited to 12 pages. Please strive to be brief but clear in your application. This does NOT include the Application Cover, or other **allowable** attachments such as researcher vitae's and letters of support.*

2. When will advance or reimbursement funds be available?

We do not have a specific date from USDA, but we are anticipating being able to disperse the funds by January 2017.

3. If awarded, will I get the amount I request?

These grants are highly competitive and choices among several sound projects are frequently required. During the 2015 grant cycle the average SCBGP application request was for \$94,130.00. The AVERAGE amount awarded for 2015 was about \$78,850.00.

4. Can the outcome of the research project be beyond the timeline of the grant?

Yes. These grants will fund projects for up to two years. The NCDA&CS understands that for many specialty crops, it may take longer than two years to reach measurable outcomes. If proposing such a project, communicate what the anticipated outcomes will be by the end of the grant and a timeline for the expected end results of the project beyond the end of the grant. It will also be important to communicate HOW the project will be able to continue without the SCBGP funds at the end of the granting period.

5. Does the proposal need to follow exactly the outline specified in the Project Profile Guidelines, or are those categories just suggestions.

Proposals need to contain the exact categories specified in the Application Guidelines. The NCDA&CS's application to USDA is required to contain these specific categories in this order for each project funded through the SCBGP. Additional documents, such as letters of commitment from project partners, may be attached.

6. Are mushrooms or huckleberries a specialty crop?

*Yes, **if they are cultivated**. Wild harvest mushrooms and berries are NOT specialty crops. A detailed list can be found at:*
<http://www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp>

7. Are seeds eligible specialty crops?

Seeds of specialty crops are eligible, seeds for non-specialty crops are not eligible.

8. Can SCBGP funds be used to purchase a greenhouse?

No, SCBGP funds cannot be used to purchase buildings. Funds can be used to purchase supplies needed to run the greenhouse.

9. Can NC-SCBGP funds be used to purchase equipment?

Equipment costing \$5000.00 or more is not eligible.

10. Can other documents be submitted with the Concept Paper packet?

Every Applicant must include the (1) Concept Paper Cover, (2) Project Profile, (3) Authorization Signature, (4) Biographical Sketches. Letters of commitment are encouraged from project partners, individuals and organizations that will be contributing to the project, and any other entity that is supportive of the proposed activity. Additional documentation providing background or supporting information is not recommended and will not be included in the review process.

11. The project calls for the purchasing of many parts that will be used to make one piece of equipment. Should this be listed as supplies?

The total amount of the parts and inputs should be totaled. If the amount is over \$5,000.00 they are unallowable.

12. What regulations are to be used when calculating travel expenses for the grant?

Travel expenses must comply with the current State of North Carolina travel per diem regulations. These rates are available on the program website: <http://www.ncspecialtycropgrant.org>

13. When can work begin on my project?

The process for approval is as follows: After USDA approval of the State Plan, the NCDA&CS will advise if your project was approved and is eligible to receive Funding. Meanwhile efforts will be underway to complete and execute the Contract, and you may be required to submit additional documents and forms after the eligibility of award announcement and prior to a Contract being executed. The NC-SCBGP advises that an anticipated project start date of January 1, 2017 is likely. You can begin efforts on your project upon the notice of award eligibility IF this date is on or after the approved date of your timeline AND WITH THE KNOWLEDGE that any expenditures PRIOR to receiving a fully executed Contract are YOUR responsibility.

14. Are sponsorships allowed?

No general sponsorship is allowed for fairs festivals, conferences or symposiums, even if they are celebrating, promoting or discussing a specialty crop.

15. What have been the stumbling blocks for past grantees?

The largest stumbling block for non-profits has been providing the specialized forms needed such as a board approved and implemented Conflict of Interest Policy, having on file an IRS letter designating a non-profit tax status, and getting the notarized statements completed. The next area of difficulty has been accurately completing the required forms, timelines, request for advances, etc. Be aware that this is a form intensive program as both Federal and State entities are demanding transparency and accountability. As a result timely attention to detail is necessary to assure fast turnaround and approvals.

16. Sample project applications can be found starting on Page 12 at:

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/SCBGPSampleStatePlan.pdf>

17. Difference between "jobs" and "careers":

Jobs are net gain of paid employment; new businesses created or adopted can indicate new careers.